

REMARKS

Upon entry of the instant amendment, claims 2-3, 5 and 8-14 are pending in the application. In the instant amendment, claims 2, 5, 12 and 13 have been amended, and claim 4 has been cancelled.

The instant amendment made herein to the claims does not incorporate new matter into the application as originally filed. For example, claim 2 has been amended by incorporating the feature of claim 4. Consequently, claim 4 has been cancelled. Claim 12 has been amended to depend on claim 2. A grammatical error has been corrected in claim 10. Support for the amendment can be found in the originally filed version of the specification at page 19, first full paragraph.

Further, the instant amendment does not raise substantial new issues for the Examiner's consideration nor require further search on the Examiner's part. At the same time, the instant amendment puts the pending claims in condition for allowance and into a more proper format for issuance in a United States patent, by overcoming all outstanding rejections of record.

Accordingly, proper consideration of each of the pending claims is respectfully requested at present, as is entry of the present amendment.

Information Disclosure Statements (IDS)

Applicants filed an IDS on October 4, 2007. The Examiner is respectfully requested to consider the references listed on the PTO-1449 form submitted with the IDS, initial and return the form to the undersigned.

35 U.S.C. § 112, Second Paragraph Rejection

In the outstanding Office Action, claim 12 has been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

In the present amendment, claim 12 has been amended to depend on claim 2. Thus, the rejection has been overcome. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejection.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 103

At pages 2-6, claims 2, 3, 10 and 12 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Taguchi U.S. '051** (U.S. Patent No. 6,485,051) in view of **Taylor U.S. '922** (U.S. Published Application No. 2003/0145922 A1), **Dahl U.S. '055** (U.S. Patent No. 6,139,055) and **Mendenhall U.S. '102** (U.S. Patent No. 6,143,102). Further, claims 5, 8, 9 and 11 have been rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over **Taguchi U.S. '051**, **Taylor U.S. '922**, **Dahl U.S. '055**, **Mendenhall U.S. '102** and **Matsuda U.S. '767** (U.S. Patent No. 5,780,767). Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

As explained above, claim 2 has been amended to recite the features of claim 4, which is allowable. Further, dependent claims 3, 5 and 8-12 depend on claim 2. Therefore, each of the rejections have been overcome. Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner withdraw the rejections.

Allowable Subject Matter

The Examiner has indicated that claim 4 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Further, claim 14 is allowed.

As explained above, independent claim 2 has been amended while reciting the features of claim 4. Further, all dependent claims therefrom (i.e., claims 3, 5 and 8-13) depend on currently amended claim 2. Therefore, all pending claims (i.e., claims 2, 3, 5 and 8-14) are in condition for allowance.

CONCLUSION

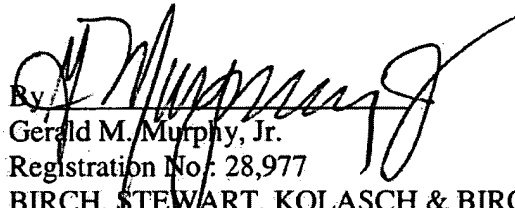
Accordingly, in view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the rejections and objections, and allowance of the pending claims are earnestly solicited.

Should there be any outstanding matters that need to be resolved in the present application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact Toyohiko Konno (Reg. No. L0053) at the telephone number of the undersigned below, to conduct an interview in an effort to expedite prosecution in connection with the present application.

If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37.C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.14; particularly, extension of time fees.

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Respectfully submitted,

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